

Architectural Conservancy Ontario – London Region Branch  
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Members of Planning & Environment Committee:

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Mayor Ed Holder – mayor@london.ca

**Re File: 39CD–20502 & OZ–9192, Draft Plan of Vacant Land Condominium, 101 Meadowlily Rd. S.**

Dear Councillors and Mayor Holder:

On behalf of ACO London, I write to express our continued concern over the proposed zoning by-law amendment to allow 52 condominium townhouses and 36 single detached dwellings at 101 Meadowlily Road South.

The proposal to place an urban/suburban townhouse/subdivision development squarely in the middle of one of the last remaining rural landscapes in the city is, in our opinion, **the antithesis of urban intensification and the London Plan’s emphasis on growing our city inward and upward**. The development is proposed for a parcel of land that is bounded on three sides by protected land: the Meadowlily Woods Environmentally Significant Area to the east, the Meadowlily Nature Preserve (owned by the Thames Talbot Land Trust, donated to the TTLT by Carol and Rick Richardson in 2002) to the north, and the city-owned Highbury Woods Park to the west.

Although there have been some improvements made since last summer, the revised application still does not address the majority of the concerns expressed in our June 12, 2020 letter to the PEC, some of which we repeat below for the benefit of those Councillors who were not on PEC at that time and who may not have seen our earlier communication.

We continue to believe that the proposed development is incongruous with the surrounding rural landscape and its heritage attributes:

- The additional “buffering” now proposed along the west side of Meadowlily Road appears to consist primarily of manicured lawn along with some native trees and shrubs. We would suggest that a denser

forest-like buffer, which is more natural in appearance and which prevents the subdivision from being seen from Meadowlily Road, would be more appropriate.

- While two access points is better than 16 access points, a single access point – at the south end of the development – would be preferred.
- The staff report makes reference to a “road widening dedication”. It is unclear whether or not actual road widening is being contemplated in conjunction with this development. We are concerned that any widening would lead to a loss of the soft shoulders and rural laneway feel of Meadowlily Road.
- Development Services Heritage Planning staff’s recommendation that the property owner consider “design refinements including articulated massing and rooflines and different eave heights to de-emphasize the dense urban character of the repeated 4-unit townhouse block” appears not to have been heeded.

According to pages 58 and 59 of Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Thor Dingman:

- “The HIA has identified two areas of potential impact from the proposed subdivision; 1. impacts that effect the heritage attributes of the cottage’s rural setting inscribed within the property; 2. impacts that effect the context surrounding Park Farm within a historic landscape. As the designation by-law states, the context of the house is crucial for maintaining a sense of the original setting, and the original farm site contributes to the verisimilitude of a historic landscape.
- The proposed development creates a new urban street edge condition with minimal setback. This new street edge is without precedent along Meadowlily Road.
- Impacts to the surrounding context of Park Farm as a historic landscape are primarily experienced when moving through the viewshed along Meadowlily Road South. The proposed medium density townhouses and detached housing frontages, set closely to the road, introduces a stark and sudden transition between urban settlement and Park Farm across the road. This has a potential negative impact on authenticity of Park Farm as part of a historic rural landscape. With the edges of the development left unbuffered, the isolation of Park Farm is emphasised and this further disconnects it from the context of a historic landscape.”

There is no addendum or revision to the original HIA in this updated material. Thus, the extent to which Mr. Dingman views his concerns as having been addressed is unclear.

The relatively small area bounded by Highbury Road South, Commissioners Road, Hamilton Road, and the eastern boundaries of Park Farm and Meadowlily Woods is extraordinarily rich in natural and heritage resources. In addition to the three above-mentioned natural areas, it contains a small bee and duck sanctuary at 25 Meadowlily Road South, the ruins of the Meadowlily Mill (the most well-preserved ruins in the city of an early London mill) and two properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act: Park Farm (the

“cottage” referred to in the HIA excerpt above) and the 1910 Meadowlily Bridge. The rural landscapes around the designated properties are important in retaining an historic sense of place appropriate to the heritage sites – with open fields, woodlots, farmsteads and the narrow, uncurbed Meadowlily Road. The latter is strongly reminiscent of the historic pathways that have led to the bridge and the mill since at least 1851 and probably since the 1820s. Although Meadowlily Road has been paved and widened at various points in its history, it remains relatively narrow and its borders retain the embankments, ditches, and vegetation characteristic of a minor country road. This quality is important as part of the overall character of the area.

For any potential rezoning of and development at 101 Meadowlily Road South, we continue to recommend the following:

1. A lower density development that is in keeping with the rural character of the area, and that is consistent with the core principles of the London Plan.
2. As suggested in our previous letter, an effort should be made to provide more imaginative architectural design evocative of traditional styles. These could, and should, be clustered in ways that would leave visual spaces at intervals between them, providing hints, at least, of rural space. The design presented in the revised application is even less imaginative and less appropriate to the location, in our opinion, than the original design.
3. A single access point to Meadowlily Road for the subdivision, instead of the two streets included in the revised application. The access point should be at the far south end of the subdivision property.
4. Keeping the soft shoulders and rural laneway feel of Meadowlily Road. In particular, Meadowlily Road should not be widened.
5. Hiding the development behind a barrier of large trees, both evergreen and deciduous, and shrubs to provide a visual, sound, and light buffer between the development, the road, and Park Farm. Although the 14 proposed driveways have been removed in the revised application, the renderings show manicured lawns with a smattering of trees. This is not suggestive of any kind of buffer or barrier. Because the Park Farm buildings are so close to the southern border of the original Park Farm property, any high-density development or development impinging on the property line would seriously affect their character. Thus, a relatively large treed setback from Meadowlily Road remains important.

Sincerely,

Kelley McKeating  
President, Architectural Conservancy Ontario – London Region

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